



California State Fire Marshal **CODE INTERPRETATION**

Date Issued	07-19-01	Interpretation #	01-014
Topic	Openings in Exit Enclosures		
Code Section(s)	§1005.3.3.5, California Building Code (1998 ed)		
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SCENARIO: The building in question is four stories in height with no basement. It is of Type I-FR construction and protected by a complete automatic fire sprinkler system. The building use is mixed and consists of Group A, Division 3 (assembly) as well as Group B (office) occupancy classifications. The structure is located on a sloping terrain such that most of the first floor is at grade with the north end below grade level. The second floor is mostly above grade with the north end at grade level. The north end of the second floor is the main building entrance. A large central court is provided at this level which serves as an exit discharge court for occupants on the second, third and fourth floors. The court is 40' x 60' and provides access to a public way.

Based upon occupant loads, the first and second floors require two separate means of egress. The third and fourth floors require three separate means of egress. Three exit stair enclosures are provided to serve all for floors.

Since the second floor is the primary means of entry for occupants, it is intended that occupants on the third and fourth floors will use the second floor court as an exit discharge court from the three exit stair enclosures. It is assumed that the exit discharge court satisfies all requirements for an exit discharge component of a means of egress system.

Occupants on the first floor exit through exterior doors at the first floor level. None of the three exit stair enclosures serve as the required means of egress for the first floor. Openings into the exit stair enclosures at the first floor are from normally occupied spaces (such as fire-rated corridors) and the design provides automatic or self-closing 90-minute fire-rated doors.

Are doors into the exit enclosure permitted at the first floor level?

No. Vertical exitways are fundamental to the safety of building occupants and their ability to safely exit the building in an emergency. Therefore, the Code narrowly limits openings into a fire-resistive enclosure of a vertical exitway to only those openings necessary to provide exit facilities for the occupants of the building spaces and openings in the exterior wall.

Section 1005.3.3.5 of the California Building Code states that openings in exit enclosures shall be limited to those necessary for egress of normally occupied spaces into and out of the enclosure. The key work in this case is necessary. In the instance described, the openings between the first and second floors are for convenience purposes only and not necessary for egress from the first floor.